RICHMOND DISPATCH-LEDGER

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Rebels finish 68-94, sweep Oklahoma City on the way out

BY **BO THREADGILL** · RICHMOND DISPATCH-LEDGER

The last home series of the year came on the 30th of September, the 1st of October and the 2nd, against Oklahoma City, a club with 90 wins and October waiting for it. The Rebels won all three. The first was 4-1. The second was 3-2. The third was 11-1, and the people who stayed until the end of it stood up at the end like they meant it. It changed nothing about the standings. I have covered this club long enough to know that a game does not have to change anything to be worth writing down.

Virginia finished 68-94, seventh in the Topaz, 35 games behind San Juan. A year ago this club won 100. No club in the league fell further. In March this city had a team it believed could play in November, and I believed it too.

In July Kaden told us the season looked lost and that he would sell the spare parts and be back next year. He did what he said. On the first of August he sent Ken Henderson and Matt Scott to Boston, with Virginia keeping a tenth of what Scott is owed, for Jim Reiser, Tom Mandich, a young pitcher named Carl Johnson and Boston's third-round pick next year. The same day Pio Takami and Danny Ortega went to Myrtle Beach for two picks, a third and a fifth in 2034. In September I asked him what the re-tool got him.

> *"We got some liquidity and value for expiring contracts," he said. "Making sure we didn't waste the opportunity to cash in while we're on a down year."*

That is a plain answer, and the ledger backs it. Henderson's contract was ending. So was Takami's. Carl Johnson is 90th on the game's Top 100 at the end of the season, at Peninsula, and that is one more name on a list that had two Rebels on it in August.

Reiser played center field for us after the deadline and hit nine home runs in 44 games and .190. His deal ends this month, and he is a free agent. When I asked whether he was the center fielder next year, Kaden said, "We'll see how the market shakes out for him in the offseason." I take that to mean the market will decide, and the market can be very particular about a .190 hitter.

The part I would keep is the part that stays. Chris Schmotzer, 25, missed five weeks in August and September after getting hurt against New Orleans on the 12th of August. He finished at .282 with a .383 on-base percentage and 20 home runs, and Kaden has said he is not going anywhere. Ben Becker, on $2.2 million, hit 33 home runs and was player of the week on the 8th of August. Tim Hart hit 32 and drove in 94, in the first year of his deal. Jesus Sifuentes played all 162 games. This club scored 680 runs. In another year that is a lineup.

The other side of it is the side that has been the trouble since March. The staff gave up 775 runs, 30th of 32, and walked 594 men, more than anyone. Church struck out 221 and walked 105, and he finished 13-13 with a 3.67, and after the deadline he had a 2.73 and gave up two home runs in 13 starts. That is a pitcher becoming something. Matt Shearon had a 3.62 after the deadline and went 1-6 for it. Rocky Gerling finished at 5.27.

Below the big club, Enrique Guzman is 53rd on the list and Jim Gaudreau 57th, both at New Castle. With Johnson that is three.

I was in the building in 2025, and I was in the building for 2031, when this club came back from 60-69 at the end of August and won three Game Sevens on the road. People ask me which one I would rather see again. This year I have been asking myself something smaller. On the 2nd of October, with nothing on the line, the stands rose. This town still comes.